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SUBJECT: EMBASSY ISLAMABAD REFUGEE AFFAIRS SECTION WEEKLY
ACTIVITY REPORT NOVEMBER 10-14

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The following is a Refugee Affairs weekly activity report for November 10 - 14. The recent spate of violence in Peshawar has caused the United Nations to draw down international staff at their Peshawar offices; other NGOs in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) have limited operations after receiving threatening letters. According to a report by the UN's Multiple Cluster Rapid Assessment Mechanism (McRAM), 85.7% of Baloch earthquake survivors have not received relief supplies, and current food stocks will suffice for less than a month; 35,000 people will need food assistance in order to avoid starvation. The Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CAR) has provided winterization kits for IDPs in Dir Lower, Mardan, Charssada and Peshawar districts. The present case load in eight government-run IDP camps in six districts is nearly 30,000, and rising. More than 183,000 people are still living with host families. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has created a hotline to assist Afghan refugees who cannot reach their offices due to weather; it will operate through March 2009. End summary.

NWFP INSECURITY CAUSES UN, OTHER NGOS TO CURTAIL OPERATIONS

¶2. (SBU) A string of violent incidents in Peshawar, including the November 12 killing of Stephen Vance of the USAID-funded FATA Livelihood Development Program, November 13 kidnapping of Iranian commercial attach Heshmatullah Atarzedeh and murder of his driver, and the recent carjacking in broad daylight of a local NGO, Society for Sustainable Development, at Kacha Gari IDP camp have shaken the humanitarian assistance community. Mohammad Adar of the UNHCR Peshawar sub-office said that UN offices in Peshawar have drawn down international staff because of the volatile security situation. Some NGOs in NWFP have reported receiving threatening letters, and they too have curtailed their activities.

BALOCH EARTHQUAKE SURVEY SHOWS URGENT NEEDS

¶3. (U) The October 29 Baluchistan earthquakes displaced 68,000 people, destroyed 3,487 houses, and damaged 4,125 more homes, according to the UN's Multiple Cluster Rapid Assessment Mechanism (McRAM) survey report. The report estimated that 85.7% of affected people have not received relief supplies. Current food stocks will suffice for less than a month, and 35,000 people will need food assistance in order to avoid starvation. USAID is partnering with two local NGOs to provide transitional shelter.

¶4. (U) Health concerns attributable to cold weather are

common, such as acute respiratory infection (ARI), Gastro/diarrhea and coughing. Women's access to health care is complicated by cultural restrictions on contact with outsiders. McRAM has reconfirmed the urgent need for shelter, warm clothes, food and medicines.

¶15. (SBU) The ICRC and Save the Children told the RAS that the situation was under control and the government and other humanitarian agencies are working on providing shelter, warm clothes, food and medicines to the victims as identified by the McRAM.

UNHCR AND CAR PROVIDE WINTERIZATION KITS FOR IDPS IN NWFP

¶16. (SBU) The Additional Commissioner for Afghan Refugees Waqar Maroof told the Refugee Affairs Specialist that the winterization program for the internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) is in progress. The Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) has provided winterization kits comprising of plastic sheets to reinforce the non-winterized tents, three blankets, one quilt and four mats to IDPs in Lower Dir, Mardan, Charssada and Peshawar districts. Comment: According to contacts of the RAS, the number of blankets as promised was not distributed to IDPs in Kacha Gari camp. Reportedly, the relationships between those living in the camp and those managing the camp are poor. End comment.

¶17. (SBU) The IDPs from Mardan Sheikh Yasin town in district Mardan and Pelosi IDP camp in district Charssada would be

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shifted soon to the camp at Jalozai (former Afghan Refugee camp and currently being used to house IDPs from Bajaur). The CAR commissioner said that 40-45 new families get registered in IDP camps on daily basis.

¶18. (SBU) The present case load in eight government-run camps in six districts is about 30,126 people, and the number is rising. Over 183,271 people are still living with host families. The UNHCR told the RAS that work by the provincial Social Welfare Department on registration of IDPs staying with host families is in progress in the eight districts.

UNHCR USES HOTLINE FOR AFGHAN REFUGEE QUERIES

¶19. (U) UNHCR has set up a 24/7 hotline to respond to queries and provide information to those who are unable to reach the UNHCR offices in Pakistan. The hotline will operate during the entire winter break (until March 2009).

ON THE HORIZON FOR THE REFUGEE AFFAIRS SECTION

¶10. December 1-5: Resettlement and Asylum Admissions Workshop, Washington DC.
PATTERSON